c.o. 776 naive and primitive way of thinking. These are popular creations, mainly tutelary deities and spirits of various realms of nature, such as Fälwära, the guardian of domestic animals; Buduri-Usad, the god of the fields; Khualar-Dar, the god of the harvest: Ävsati, the protector of the deer, the ibex and other game; Donbettyr (Donbettär), the guardian spirit of the waters, the fish and fishermen; Safa, the tutelary spirit of the chain which hangs about the hearth and is so holy an object in an Osset's house, that its removal can bring about the death of the inhabitants of the house and its c.o. theft can lead to a blood feud; Runibari, a god [753] of health (who brings disease and wards it off); c.o. the Geniata or Fazbadata, the guardian spirits [769] of families and the spirits (ghosts) of deceased souls, who are supposed to watch over, and further the well-being of, their families on earth. It is characteristic of the mentality of the Ossets that one of their guardian spirits, Saureg-Gsua by name, protects even thieves and robbers.

However, functions of guardianship are also attributed to some of the Christian saints who have become prominent figures in the religion of the Ossets. Vastyrdzhi (Digor Vasgergi), Saint George, protects travelers, controls military roads and mountain paths, and in contrast to the spirit Saurge-Gsua mentioned above, persecutes thieves and robbers and punishes perjurers and murderers. Vatsilla,